

REMARKS

Applicants have carefully reviewed and considered the Examiner's Office Action dated December 27, 2005. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and comments set forth below.

Applicants thank Examiner Tawfik for the courtesies extended to his representative during the personal interview held on April 5, 2006. During that interview, the Office Action mailed December 27, 2005, U.S. Patent No. 3,050,427 and a proposed amendment to claim 1 were discussed. The following comments set forth Applicants' summary of the interview.

By this Amendment, claims 1 and 3 are amended, non-elected claims 14-26 are canceled without prejudice to filing a divisional application, and new claims 27-28 are presented directed to the curved fluidized bed shown in Figures 6-9 and 12-20 of the present application. Accordingly, claims 1, 3-13 and 27-28 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1, 3-7 and 11-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,050,427 to Slayter *et al.* (hereinafter referred to as "Slayter") for the reasons set forth in the paragraphs spanning pages 2-3 of the Action. In addition, claim 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Slayter, as described in the paragraph in the middle of page 4 of the Action. As stated above, independent claim 1 is amended and to the extent Slayter may be used, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a method for producing a nonwoven fiber composite for the manufacture of filters in the tobacco industry. The nonwoven fiber

composite is produced by the following steps: 1) feeding separated fiber materials to a fluidized bed; 2) introducing a transport air through the fluidized bed to transport the separated fiber material to a suction conveyor where the transport air flows through the fluidized bed in the direction of the suction conveyor; and 3) compiling the fiber material on the suction conveyor wherein the fluidized bed comprises a curved portion, in which the separated fiber material is directed in an upward direction to the suction conveyor.

Slayter is directed to a fibrous glass product and method of manufacture thereof. Figure 1 of Slayter shows a picker 22 that shreds the mat 16 of glass fibers 13, which move downward, by the force of gravity, to a suction box 31. Nozzles 39, 65, 111 (Figures 1, 2, 5) of Slayter apply a binder material to the shredded glass fibers. Thus, Slayter discloses adding a binder to the glass fibers, which would join the fibers together. This is the opposite result achieved by 2) introducing a transport air through the fluidized bed to transport the *separated* fiber material to a suction conveyor. At the personal interview, the Examiner agreed that Slayter did not introduce air, but resin via hopper 24 or binder via nozzles 39, 65, 111 to the shredded glass fibers 34, 66; and thus, Slayter could not anticipate claim 1, as amended. That is, Slayter does not disclose the recited transport air that flows through the fluidized bed in the direction of the suction conveyor, as recited in claim 1.

In addition, a “wherein” clause is added that recites the features of the fluidized bed shown in Figures 6-9 and 12-20 of the present invention. In particular, the fluidized bed has “a curved portion, in which the separated fiber material is directed in an upward direction to the suction conveyor”. This subject matter is also described in paragraph [0089] and original claim 20 of the originally-filed application. New claim 27 is

supported by original claim 20. New claim 28 is supported by paragraph [0113] of the originally-filed application.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully requested that the rejections of record be withdrawn and that a Notice of Allowance be issued indicating that claims 1, 3-13 and 27-28 are allowed over the prior art of record.

Should the Examiner believe that a conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned counsel to arrange such a conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: April 27, 2006



Catherine M. Voorhees
Registration No. 33,074
VENABLE LLP
P.O. Box 34385
Washington, D.C. 20043-9998
Telephone: (202) 344-4000
Telefax: (202) 344-8300

CMV/elw

::ODMA\PCDOCS\DC2DOCS1\736098\1